

Co-op Feasibility Studies

A framework for assessment

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Rationale and support

Introduction and Overview

Co-operative Education & Career Services (CECS) has traditionally accommodated the employment and process needs requested by authors of new or modified programs with a co-op component. While some programs have benefited from early engagement of CECS in the design and development of the program to ensure a successful implementation of co-op, more often CECS involvement occurs late in the process adding risk and cost to job development and employment relations.

Given the myriad economic and environmental forces affecting the workplace, UW has tasked the Faculties and CECS to assess early-on the employment opportunities and challenges of new or modified co-op programs. To this end, CECS has recently spearheaded a study framework and methodology to enable appropriate due diligence and collaboration with its Faculty partners in conducting co-op feasibility assessments prior to Senate-level approvals. The new co-op feasibility study framework is described here. It is endorsed at both the undergraduate and graduate levels and is now regularly used to assess co-op in new or changing programs.

Tie-in to Undergraduate and Graduate Program Development

Senate (undergrad) requirement:

Guidelines for Academic Program Reviews at the University of Waterloo, June 2004

Procedures for Establishing New Undergraduate Programs at the University of Waterloo , September 2007

Graduate Studies Office

New Programs - UW/OCGS/MTCU Timelines, Preparation, Approval and Implementation Processes

Step 1 -- distribution of the “*statement of intent to develop a program proposal*” now includes CECS

Purpose – When to use and Why

When are feasibility studies required:

- in conjunction with the development of new or changing co-op programs or plans.
- significant changes in curriculum affecting co-op employment (increased admissions)
- other course realignments that affect co-op employability (new or different skills)

Feasibility studies will formalize assessment of co-op success factors:

- expected changes in supply of students in a program or plan
- the employability of students in the proposed program
- the employment demand or the potential for shifts in demand
- allows CECS to assess the lead time to develop appropriate job opportunities
- identify additional resources needed to develop employment opportunities

Framework and Process

Guiding Principles

- to ensure the viability and longevity of UW co-op plans for all stakeholders:
students, employers, faculty and CECS
- the scope will be jointly determined by the Faculty and CECS
- not intended to be an obstacle or onerous
- will involve the degree of due diligence commensurate with the scope
- will be completed in a timely fashion with regular updates to stakeholders
- a feasibility assessment is a partnership activity

Framework and Process

Implementation Protocol

- initial discussions between the Faculty/Department and CECS will determine scope
- CECS will manage the overall feasibility study process
 - including establishing the lead times necessary to complete the study
- A base template has been developed to identify key components of the analysis
 - Depending upon scope, only selected areas of the analysis defined by the template headings may be relevant or necessary
- the feasibility study is a collaborative undertaking with the faculty, department or school

Framework and Process

Key considerations in analysis

- need for fast turnaround – “ feasibility template” = work-in-progress
- effects on applications and admissions to program
- marketing and messaging
- faculty intent / strategy ... quantity vs. quality of student
- assessing impacts on job availability and relevance –
- net new “jobs” vs. cross-discipline unfilled and surpluses
- lead times
- driving from a valid and reliable information base

Opportunities and Challenges

Leadership in Co-op for CECS and UW

- defining and effective and efficient feasibility assessment methodology
- identifying and utilizing appropriate market, industry and labour force data
- evolving proactive, targeted, job development best practices
- forging deeper and more strategic links with employers and community

Broadened CECS / Faculty Relations

- the “best laid” plans for new and changing co-op programs... early in the process
- mutual and strategic guidance and support... program outcomes, curriculum, new skills
- enhancing co-op/program success and value to the students... timely and relevant work

Execution Challenges

... lead times and resources, starting early enough, evolving methodology, integrating data

... evolving a process of periodic or continuous feasibility assessment of programs

Outline of Study Template

A template for guiding studies has been created. It is a work in progress and is intended to be adapted during the initial scoping phase so that only the program relevant sections are completed.

CECS Deliverables

- timing (critical item) – provide for both the initial investigation and to do job development
- resource requirements

Faculty/Department Deliverables

- proposal objective / educational goals
- rationale for renaming co-op plans (as applicable)
- context (within faculty) / competition (within and external to the faculty)
- admission / enrollment requirements & strategy
- work term sequence

Joint Deliverables

- societal goals / employability expectations (evidence of demand, etc.)
- industry / labour analysis (including current employers for plans being renamed)
- geographic scope (e.g., local, national, international)
- congruence with professional accreditation (e.g., PEng, CAFCE, etc.)

Undergrad Programs to date...

IT Management -- rebranding/renaming of the Math/Bus - Systems Management Option

Contacts = Peter Wood / David McKinnon, Math; Scott Davis, CECS

“Jobs” Issue = no net new admissions; redistribution of student post admission most likely impact

Status = Complete. CECS supported as proposed, passed at Senate

Health Studies and Gerontology General Co-op program -- To raise the academic standard for honours for course access

Contact = Linda Jessup, HS&G; Rick Roach, CECS

“Jobs” Issue = creating a general program, will shift existing students, no net increases expected

Status = Complete. CECS supported as proposed, passed at Senate (final report still being finalized)

Geography and Environmental Management Co-op Program -- renaming of this plan to attract applicants

Contact = Ian McKenzie, Geography; Linda Davis, CECS

“Jobs” Issue = current pool can accommodate initial growth, FoE focus on quality over quantity

Status = Complete. CECS supported, recommending controlled admissions growth, passed at Senate

Undergrad Programs to date...

Arts and Business, Global Engagement Specialization – new option for Arts and Business

Contacts = Emanuel Carvalho, Associate Dean, Co-op, Arts; Linda Davis, CECS

“Jobs” Issue = offer additional area of specialization, possible international co-op, no net new students

Status = Complete. CECS supported as adequate jobs available (including international); passed at Senate

Arts and Business Co-op – removal of 1st spring work term and the creation of an 8 month wt after 3B

Contact = Emanuel Carvalho, Associate Dean, Co-op, Arts; Linda Davis, CECS

“Jobs” Issue = positive for existing employers - better prepared students; demand for extended wt

Status = Complete. CECS supported as proposed, passed at Senate

Math Studies -- rebranding/renaming of Math/Sciences plan

Contacts = Peter Wood / David McKinnon, Math; Scott Davis, CECS

“Jobs” Issue = no net new admissions

Status = Pending. CECS supported (final report not complete, recommendation not yet announced to Math)

Undergrad Programs – in progress or coming up...

School of Planning, Environment – request for mandatory co-op

Contacts = Clarence Woudsma and Karen Hammond, FoE; Linda Davis, CECS

“Jobs” Issue = will double co-op students and increase need for jobs substantially by 2011

Status = Initial meeting, early issues discussed, scoping in progress ; target is Senate Feb 09 CECS

Mathematical Economics – rebranding/renaming of Math/Bus - Economics Option [equivalent plan will be operating in Economics (Arts)]

Contacts = Peter Wood / David McKinnon, Math; Scott Davis, CECS

“Jobs” Issue = no net new admissions; redistribution of student post admission most likely impact

Status = initial discussion stage, just beginning to flesh out the feasibility template

Arts and Business, Sexuality, Marriage and Family Studies major in co-op . . . passed at UGAG

Contacts = Emanuel Carvalho, John Rempel, BJ Rye, Faculty of Arts; Linda Davis, CECS

Status = initial meetings planned

Biomedical co-op program

Contacts = Bernard P. Duncker, Ph.D., Associate Professor Department of Biology; Rick Roach, CECS

Status= A couple of preliminary meetings have taken place between Science and CECS.

Recreation general program

Status = No formal discussions.

Graduate Programs -- in progress...

Masters in Management Science

Co-op Implementation Study

Contacts = Miguel Anjos; Associate Chair for Graduate Studies and Research; Randy Dodd, CECS

Background = There have been a handful of students over the last few years that have taken advantage of the existing co-op option in the Masters Management Science programme. Some procedures had been established via the relationship between CECS and MSci Department staff. (documentation and scope of the procedures require improvement)

Recent changes related to the Masters programme include:

- Faculty & Staff changes within the Department and CECS and (leading to a lack of common understanding/procedures)
- Increasing profile of the Masters co-op option with the Department and the students
- Establishment of an undergrad Management Engineering programme. Students from the new undergrad programme (particularly I, Sr.) could be detrimentally affected by growth in the co-op Masters programme

Status = In Progress Initial meeting has been held. Goals to improve procedures and documentation and evaluate potential effects on Management Undergrad programme, address admissions numbers. The programme is already established so focus on implementation over feasibility.

Graduate Programs -- in progress...

Co-op M. Eng in Civil (Infrastructure)

Contacts = Neil Thomson, Chair, Civil & Environmental Engineering; Randy Dodd, CECS

Background = Civil has proposed a new M. Eng (Infrastructure) in a regular and co-op internship version. CECS developed an MOU (predated the feasibility template).

Status = In Progress The new programmes have not yet been approved by the provincial body. Six M. Eng students were permitted into the recruiting process for the fall work term, at the request of the Department Chair & Acting Dean (all found employment). They are enrolled in the original, regular Civil M. Eng programme and will be transferred into the new co-op M. Eng Infrastructure when it becomes an approved programme. CECS to follow up with the Department of Civil Eng. regarding next summer (concern about state of Civil job market and potential detrimental effect on sr. Civil jobs if masters students are admitted).

Masters in Health Informatics with Concentration in Computer Science

Contacts = Doug Stinson / Jay Black / Arnie Dyck, Math; Scott Davis, CECS

“Jobs” issue = tbd

Status = In Progress. Initial meeting of stakeholders has not yet occurred. However program was approved at the October 2008 meeting of Math Representative Council. School of Computer Science will seek approval from Senate Grad Council at their November meeting; but, are prepared to move ahead with a regular program initially pending the results of the feasibility study (Arnie Dyck & Scott Davis co-ordinating)

Graduate Programs -- in progress and coming up...

Masters Program in Public Service

Contacts = Bruce Muirhead, Arts Grad Office, History; Linda Davis, CECS

“Jobs” issue = tbd, although they will be in the public sector and cross all levels of government; may be hiring issues with international students

Status = In Progress. Attending very first introductory meeting hosted by Dean of Arts; pre-scoping session with key contact Muirhead; next steps are scoping and study design.

M. Eng in E&CE (No info yet)

Contacts = tbd

Status = no progress as yet

Double Degree Math/Business (with WLU)

Contacts = tbd

Status = no progress as yet; awaiting draft proposal